

Texas Jewish Historical Society

Preserving Jewish Heritage in Texas
Established 1980



August, 2002

Mark Your Calendars: Joint Meeting with the Southern Jewish Historical Society

October 25-27, 2002

Shreveport, Louisiana

Featuring:

SPEAKERS
TOURS
EXHIBITS
EXPERTS PANELS
SHABBAT SERVICES
AND MORE!

The
World of
Sheraton®



*For complete details, including
registration information, turn to page 11*

From the Prez

I want to thank the members of the Texas Jewish Historical Society for electing me as your President for 2002-2003. Thanks to the officers and board members for agreeing to serve in the upcoming year. Special thanks to Helen Wilk for chairing the nominating committee and to Davie Lou Solka for the outstanding installation ceremony.

I know this will not be an easy task, but I will dedicate myself to furthering the objectives of the Society in the manner of our esteemed past presidents. To this end, all the board meetings for the upcoming year have been set, so get out your calendars and

mark them. We want your attendance and input at all of our meetings. Our Fall Board Meeting and shared programming with the Southern Jewish Historical Society is October 25-27 in Shreveport, our Winter Board Meeting is January 24-26 in Tyler and the Annual Gathering and shared programming with the Dallas Jewish Historical Society takes place April 25-27, 2003 in Dallas.

The meeting in Shreveport will give us the opportunity to be exposed to top notch presentations from scholars in the field of Southern Jewish History. We will hold our own TJHS Board Meeting on Sunday

morning. A side trip to Branson is also being planned at this time to take place before the meeting. Please see page 18 for details.

As I told everyone at my installation, my door is always open to suggestions. I want to hear from you. My only request is if you e-mail me, please put TJHS in the subject, so it will not get deleted. I look forward to an exciting and productive year. With your help, we can accomplish many good things for the Society.



Historical Texas Synagogues

Send Historical Texas Synagogues note cards when corresponding with friends or relatives. Each pack contains color prints, two each of five different synagogues - 10 cards and 10 envelopes.

Package A contains: Temple Beth-El, Corsicana; Temple Mizpah, Abilene; Temple Freda, Bryan; Temple Beth Israel, San Angelo; Schwarz Family Synagogue, Hempstead

Package B contains: B'nai Israel, Galveston; Temple Emanuel, Beaumont; B'nai Abraham Synagogue, Brenham; Sinai Hebrew Congregation, Jefferson; B'nai Israel, Victoria

Order Form

Name: _____ Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____ Telephone: (____) _____

Quantity: _____ Pack A @ \$10.85 each _____ Pack B @ \$10.85 each *Discount to shops (40%)*

Shipping: 1-5 packs: \$3; 6-10 packs: \$4; Over 10 add \$.50 per pack Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Make check or money order payable to: **The Texas Jewish Historical Society** and send it with this form to: TJHS, c/o Don Schlossberg, 4 Cedarwing Lane, The Woodlands, TX 77980. Allow 4-6 weeks delivery.

Retail shops receive a 40% discount with a minimum order of any 10 packs.

A Texas Resale Certificate must be included with order.

NOTE:

If you know of any TJHS members who have passed away or married, requiring a change in membership status, please notify:

Fay Brachman, 3720 Autumn Drive, Fort Worth, TX 76109

Phone: 817-924-9207, E-mail: leonhb@flash.net

DEADLINE:

The deadline for the next newsletter is

November 1, 2002



Letter From the Editor *or Freedman Slips*

I once heard a story about a company

that had some 50 employees. An insurance salesman offered the company an excellent insurance policy, provided 100% of the employees signed on. When all but one employee signed up, the salesman told the company owner that unless the lone holdout signed, there would be no deal. The president then called the obstinate employee in to explain why he would not agree to the policy. After listening to his story, the president simply said, "if you don't sign, you're fired!" When the salesman asked the employee why he didn't sign when he asked, the now

cooperative employee said "you didn't explain it like the boss did." I would like to think that perhaps my April **Slips** had such an effect.

There is a Jewish superstition that to speak of something good is to risk (G-d forbid) the evil eye putting an end to it. This is sometimes referred to as giving a "canary." More properly, the term is *kayn aynhoreh*. So those of you familiar with this will understand when I say "kayn aynhoreh," we have received enough stories that Jack and I must save some articles for the next **NEWSLETTER**. What a great situation! Not to have to worry about filling another edition. Thanks to those of you who have taken the time to submit your stories.

There are yet many untold stories

of Jews who have contributed greatly to the growth and development of Texas. While he was not Jewish, in the next issue, I hope to be able to print a story about President Lyndon Johnson and his relationship with Jews in Texas. It should be very interesting.

I would appreciate hearing from anyone who can give me the names and addresses of people who may know or have known some of our Jewish pioneers. With this information, I will contact them for stories. I will be happy to hear from you, write, e-mail or phone.

Buddy Freed

What to Ask in an Oral History Interview

Compiled by Miriam Weiner

- Was our name changed? If so, what was the original name?
- Do you know the origin of the name?
- Who were you named after and how are you related to that person?
- What towns did your family come from in Europe? Where were those towns located?
- In what other nearby towns did you have family members?
- Who was the first ancestor in your family to immigrate from the "old country?" When did he come?
- When your ancestor came to this country, did he/she travel with other relatives? Who were they?
- Who received your relative when he first immigrated and did he join a landsmanshafn society?
- Do you know the name of the ship and port of entry?
- Do you know if your immigrant ancestor was naturalized? If so, in what court and when?
- Do you have any old family documents or old photos?
- What was life in Europe like? What are some of your early childhood memories?
- What were the family occupations—in the old country and the early years here?
- Did any of the family members serve in the military armed forces, either here or in the old country?
- Were there any special family traditions that have been handed down through the years?
- What were the names and relationships of family members who perished during the Holocaust?
- What contact continued with the old country? Did you receive letters from relatives who remained in Europe? Were those letters saved?
- Do you know of any cousins (including distant cousins) who emigrated to the U.S., Canada, South America, England, France, Australia, South Africa and Israel before and after World Wars I and II? Do you have names and addresses of relatives who continue to live in the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe?
- Is there a "cousins" club or family circle club in existence?
- Do you know of any relatives who have recorded the family history? Has anyone published a history of your family?

Mount Sinai Congregation, Texarkana, Texas/Arkansas

History and Evolution: 1885-2002

Compiled by Leon (Lonnie) Lurie of Fort Worth, Texas

The Very Early Years Prior to Jewish Settlement

As early as 1840, rudiments of a permanent town began to take form at Lost Prairie, in the Old Caddo Territory, some 15 miles east of the present Texarkana. Railroads were seeing the potential of the vast new territory and in the late 1850's the Cairo & Fulton Railroad was pushing across Arkansas from the East. By 1874, the railroad had crossed the Red River and was at the Texas State line, which opened up service directly to St. Louis, Missouri. At this same time, the Texas & Pacific Railroad was pushing across Texas from the West, and the logical end-point was to connect to the Cairo & Fulton. This connecting point was to be Texarkana. The Texas & Pacific Railroad sold the first lots on December 8, 1873, and thus the migration began, coming from the West and from the East.

There seem to be no reliable records of Jewish families who came prior to the joining of the two railroads, but from 1873 on, Jewish families came to northeast Texas from many points west, including Galveston via Dallas, and from the East Coast via St. Louis, Missouri, including the author's great-grandparents and grandparents. These early Jewish families saw the opportunities af-

forded by the railroads and put down their roots, which led to the establishment of the Mount Sinai Congregation.

Mount Sinai 1875-1900

The first record of Jews coming to Texarkana seems to be in early 1875, and immediately they became involved with the city's development. Family names included Heilbron, Kosminsky, Marx, Berlinger, Sandberger (author's great-grandparents), Scherer, Krouse, Deutschmann, Mendels (author's great-uncle), to name a few.

Initial services were held in Kosminsky Hall and there is a record from 1875 of a meeting of the Texarkana Hebrew Benevolent Association. Obviously, the early families came together for services prior to 1875, but original incorporation documents were lost, so the 1875 date was selected. Rabbi Friedman of Camden, Arkansas, conducted the first recorded High Holy Days Service, in 1885. There was no permanent rabbi until the end of the century, with the first being A. Shriber.

Records indicate that a Jewish cemetery was also established in 1875. In 1890, the congregants decided it was time for a permanent place of worship. The Episcopal Church at 5th

and Olive was for sale, to be moved. The building was purchased, moved to 8th and State Line, and transformed into a synagogue. In 1892, the building next to the synagogue caught fire, totally destroying the block. This was a defining moment for the congregation, so they drew on their pioneering spirit and decided to try again. Property was available at 4th and Walnut, which was bought and a new synagogue was built and dedicated in 1894. In 1893, a constitution of Mount Sinai Congregation was adopted and signed by all 29 member families.

It should be noted that among the movers and shakers, Joseph Deutschmann was at the forefront. A major canal was named after him. He was part owner of the first streetcar line. In addition, he financially assisted many of the early Jewish merchants in getting on their feet. Records also show his generosity to the city's non-Jewish organizations, possibly paving the way for all Jewish families to be accepted throughout the new town.

There were many articles published locally about the Jewish community, including:

- 1884 – *Best cafe in town run by Martin Levy;*
- 1884 – *Marks Kosminsky, the leading merchant hires a female clerk to assist the ladies;*
- 1885 – *Wedding of Larry Klein of Galveston to Miss Nettie Marx of Texarkana;*
- 1886 – *Leon Rosenberg, a collector for the Citizens Bank;*
- 1886 – *Charles Goldberg converts*

continued on page 5

The Texas Jewish Historical Society Newsletter

is a publication of the Texas Jewish Historical Society, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, Texas 78766



Charles B. Hart (Temple)
Buddy Freed (Fort Worth)
Sandra Freed (Fort Worth)
Hollace Weiner (Fort Worth)
Nancy Polunsky (San Angelo)
Alexa Kirk (Fort Worth)

President
Managing Editor
Proofreader
Proofreader
Proofreader
Layout and Typesetting

to Christianity and becomes the pastor of Pine Street Presbyterian Church;

- 1898 – Eight Jews from Texarkana enlist in the army and fight in the Spanish-American War.

1901-1935 Highlights

- 1901 – B'nai Brith Lodge #520 organized by Rabbi Bogen (author's family by marriage) of Texarkana and Rabbi Faber of Tyler;
- 1909 – Confirmation services held;
- 1917 – Zionist Association organized;
- 1918 – Jews in military service included Kosminsky, Kusin, Mendels and others. Most of the Jewish community involved in the Liberty Loan and War Stamp Drive;
- 1929 – Lilli Bogen Morris, operatic singer from Texarkana performs in concert;
- 1930 – Temple completely renovated. Morris Sandberger and Rose Raphael (author's great-uncle and grandmother) serve as committee co-chairs;
- 1931 – Jewish Charity Chest organized to care for indigent transients;
- 1935 – Ground broken on January 23 for the Ehrlich Educational Building, which is completed and dedicated on April 14 that same year.
- Rabbis: A. Shriber (end of the 19th Century); Joseph Bogen (1900-1906); Israel Heinberg (1914-1915); Rudolph Farber (1915-1922); A. Rosenberg (1925-1927); David Alpert (1928-1935); David Eichhorn (1935)

Prominent members of the congregation during this period: Harry, Simon, and Joe Ehrlich; Leo Krouse; Ike Schwartz; Louis Josephs; Leonce Kosminsky, M.D. (first Jewish child born in Texarkana); and Nettie Klein (one of the first female physicians in Texas).

1935-1960

These years saw World War II come and go, as well as the 40's and 50's, bringing many new Jewish families to the congregation. On and around Broad Street Jewish merchants abounded. Family names included Friedman, Feinberg, Antweil, Walcow, Rosenwasser, Kaufman, Meyers, Glick, Gilden, Vener, Segal, Greenberg, Kusin, Fleischman, Steinhart, Licht, Kennedy, Bishkin, Lurie (author's parents), Sandberger (author's uncle), Wexler, Schiff, Garber, Kaleski, Zimmerman, Danziger, Culang, Silberberg, Sullivan, Shuman, Collins, Kosminsky, Tavel and many more. Many had original roots in Texarkana and others came during this period for the opportunities available.

The year 1948 brought the birth of Israel and as such the congregation had many different events to raise money for the new state.

In 1946, the congregation accepted an offer and sold the Temple in 1947. A vote to build a new Temple was taken with 39 Texarkana families and 7 out of town members present. Property at 1310 Walnut Street was purchased in July, 1947, and construction of the new Mount Sinai was begun. It was dedicated on March 27, 1949. During construction, many public places and Christian churches were used to hold services and Sunday school. The new sanctuary held 90, and there was a full kitchen, social hall, a study for the rabbi, and a religious school room. In 1956, three additional rooms were added to provide for an expanded religious school. In 1959, air conditioning was installed. Mount Sinai Sisterhood was always the strong arm and helping hand of the congregation, providing everything to make holidays and celebrations special. Sisterhood presidents, some of whom served more than one term, were Mrs. Leon

Arnold, Mrs. Norman Bartel, Mrs. Julius Lurie (author's mother), Mrs. Ralph Brody, Mrs. Leo Walkow, Mrs. Louis Gold, Mrs. Louise Sullivan, Mrs. Henry Kaufman, Mrs. Melvin Kusin and Mrs. Ruben Gilden.

B'nai Brith Women #503 was organized in 1947.

1960-1985

Great changes occurred during this period with most of the Jewish merchants either closing their shops to move out of town, retiring, or passing away. The city of Texarkana was changing and the congregation began to lose its members one by one.

Rabbi Joseph Levine's tenure was from 1958 to 1981, and he left his mark on both the Jewish and Christian communities. He was greatly loved throughout the entire area. Since his death in 1981, the congregation has relied on student rabbis.

In 1974, the Mount Sinai Cemetery, located on State Line Avenue, was renamed Mount Sinai Memorial Park and its upkeep provided through a perpetual care fund. Even with the loss of membership during these years, the Temple remained a vital part of Jewish life, providing as always for its members.

From 1975-1985, many improvements were made to the Temple through the generosity of the members and friends. A rededication and centennial celebration was held on November 8, 1985. Rabbi Alex Lilienthal officiated.

It was reported that only four children were in religious school in 1985, and a total membership, including all children, was 44 individuals.

1985-present

Mount Sinai is 117 years old and still hanging in there as an operating Temple, even though there are only some 18 families who are members.

continued on page 6

Rabbi Max Hoffman, Ph.D.

A Pre-World War I Rabbi in Waco

By A.A.J. Hoffman

In 1948 I came to Texas to attend the University of Texas. Across from the University, I found Jacobson's, a men's clothing store. The Jewish owner, Henry Jacobson related that he was from Waco. I mention that my father, Rabbi Max Hoffman, served in Waco before WWI. **Here is the small world story.** My father had lived with the Jacobson family in Waco. Henry said my father's picture still hung on the wall of the Jacobson home.

Around 1880, Max Hoffman immigrated from Minsk, Russia. His Russian family name was Zeldovich. Although he came from a rabbinical family, the family business was munitions manufacture for the Czar. The entire family left after business with the Czar turned sour. My father immigrated to Cleveland and lived with family until he received a Bachelor of Hebrew Literature from Hebrew Union College in June 1907.

Mount Sinai, continued from page 5

Several new families come to Texarkana each year, so hopefully the numbers will grow. Regular weekly services and Sunday school have been discontinued, but a student rabbi comes in once a month to hold services and again to conduct High Holy Days services.

Please Note:

The Texas Jewish Historical Society and the editorial staff of this newsletter cannot guarantee the accuracy or authenticity of any article. This is the responsibility of each contributor, so please direct your questions, comments and/or corrections to each author directly.

He continued his education in New York at the Jewish Theological Seminary. He received his Rabbinical Degree in 1913. Solomon Schecter, Mordecai M. Kaplan and Joshua A. Joffe signed his diploma. His first pulpit was in Waco (remember the movie "Frisco Kid"?). Tenure with the Waco congregation was brief; otherwise I might have turned out to be a native Texan. I visited, in Waco, with Henry Jacobson's parents in about 1950. They told me about the congregational fight, which led to his departure. While in Waco, I visited with a 90-plus-year old Jew named Wizig (owner of a hardware store). Wizig also remembered my father.

After graduating from the Jewish Theological Seminary, Rabbi Max Hoffman met and married my mother, Leona Fineman, a Romanian immigrant. Rabbi Hoffman had pulpits in Berlin (New Hampshire), Easton (PA), Washington (DC), Hyde Park (New

The Temple property, which remains a landmark in the community, is well maintained through the generosity of past and present members. With so few members, however, the Sisterhood has ceased to exist, but as has been a tradition for many years, a fundraising auction is held at the end of summer and continues to be a successful weekend.

For those passing through Texarkana who wish to see the Temple, please contact the author at 817-927-5591. I will be glad to see that a member of the congregation arranges it for you.

NOTE: The information contained herein was developed from documents in the author's files and is felt to be accurate. Any errors or misspelled names are unintended.

York) and finally in Spring Valley (NY). My father died in 1933 at the age of 46 leaving a widow and four children.

Rabbi Max Hoffman also earned a Ph.D. in Philosophy (1914). He was a nationally recognized lecturer and author. He served on the faculty of Columbia University. Among his many publications the most widely read was a book in Yiddish about Kabala. He was fluent in seven languages.

Letter to the Editor

Hello. I'm the archivist at Congregation Albert. We are trying to find photographs of our former Rabbis. One of them, a S. J. Schwab who served here in 1923-1924 apparently did something in both Victoria, TX and Wichita Falls. He may or may not have served as a Rabbi. The tiny bit of information that we have is from the American Jewish Archives in Cincinnati. It looks like the Temples in both places don't exist anymore and I wonder if their records might have gone to you.

Even if you don't have a photograph, we have absolutely no information on this man and would appreciate anything you might turn up. If you don't have such information, would you have any idea who might? I infer from the AJA that he went to Texas after 1924. Thanks for any help you might be able to give.

Judy Weinreb
(Judy@lightsouthwest.com)
Congregation Albert, Attn: Archives
3800 Louisiana Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87108
(505) 883-1818

The Winkler Family in Fort Stockton

by Edward Winkler

The history of the Winkler family in Fort Stockton and West Texas is really the story of Nathan Winkler, pioneer merchant and long-time resident of Fort Stockton.

Dad was born Feb. 14, 1883, in Zubna, Hungary, the third of a family of five boys and two girls.

As many young people of European countries did at that time, he sought the opportunities offered by the new world. He arrived in New York at the age of eighteen on a day he said he had no difficulty remembering—the day President McKinley was assassinated in 1901.

Dad worked in New York for a short time...at hard labor, as he described it...then came to West Texas. Two older half-brothers had preceded him to the United States and West Texas. The older brother, Charles, was a partner in the Winkler-Hudson department store in San Angelo and there Dad went to work. Another brother, Herman, operated a department store in Ballinger.

When a manager was needed for a department store in Coleman, Dad was selected for the job and remained there



N. Winkler's Department Store in Breckenridge, Texas, Dec. 1922

for eight years. He had no formal education after arriving in the States, and it was in Coleman with the help of Mrs. Litt, the store owner's wife, that he became proficient not only in speaking the language but in writing skills as well. Unlike many immigrants, Dad never spoke with an accent.



Thanksgiving, 1960 in Fort Stockton.

Left to Right: Edward, 44; Fannie, 42; Miriam, 40;

Herman, 47. Herman died 20 years later.

Edward is now almost 86, Fannie 84 and Miriam 82

Ambitious and hard-working, he desired a business of his own. Learning of the impending growth of Fort Stockton expected from large-scale irrigated farming, along with the extension of the railroad through Fort Stockton, he thought it might be the right time for a business of his own.

So in late fall of 1911, he paid a visit to

Fort Stockton. To reach the town, he first went to Sweetwater, took the train to Monahans, and rode to Fort Stockton via stagecoach. In Fort Stockton he found a small building in what is now the 300 block of Nelson Street that he thought suitable for opening his business. He then went to New York to buy his stock of merchandise and then got married. Together, he and Mother returned to Fort Stockton and in the spring of 1912 opened their business. Mother, like most pioneer women in those days, worked in the business, and her efforts were an important contribution.

Let me make a minor digression here. When merchandise began arriving for the Nathan Winkler store, there was not sufficient room to store it. The dominant store in town was just across the street from the old Springhurst Hotel. Mr. James Rooney, hearing of Dad's plight, graciously and generously offered his storage

continued on page 8

space for incoming use in the Rooney mercantile business.

The Winkler department store was housed in two other locations until the building that still bears its name was built on Main Street.

Hard work and good business judgement brought success to the Winkler store. Subsequent stores were opened in Alpine, Breckenridge, Wink, Pecos, Odessa, and Kermit. All but those in Fort Stockton, Odessa, and Kermit were closed during the years.

After Dad opened a store in Breckenridge, he moved the family there for several years. In 1929, sensing a greater potential lay in Pecos County and the Permian Basin area, he returned to Fort Stockton and active management of the store.

Dad remained active in the store until his 89th year, at which time he retired. After we took Dad's car keys, daughter-in-law Selma would take him to the store each day. If for some reason she failed to show up or was late, he would start walking from his home to the store, a distance of one and one-half miles.



May 1957. Left to right: Second wife Selma Metzger Winkler 63, granddaughter Katherine Winkler 5, Nathan Winkler 74

Nathan was always active in community affairs. He was a charter member of the Fort Stockton Chamber of Commerce and Lions Club, as well as a founding member of Temple



Nathan and Selma Metzger Winkler on the occasion of his 91st birthday

Beth-El in Odessa and the Temple in Breckenridge. It was there that sons Herman and Edward were Bar Mitzvah. He was an eternal optimist. When things appeared bleakest, for example, during the depression of 1929 - 1931, he took an ad in the local paper after the First National Bank closed, urging people to "Rise above adversity as Pecos County has always done" and to "Hold your chin up and be men and women of the West..."

He died at the age of 94, leaving a legacy of generosity, integrity and goodwill among his many friends here and throughout the state.

Mother died in 1948; and in 1951 Dad married Selma Metzger, who survived him. She was a survivor of three years in a concentration camp, as was her younger daughter, Eva. After Dad's death, Selma moved to San Francisco to be with daughters Laura and Eva. Selma passed away in 1989, also at the age of 94. Her story can be found on the Internet site: www.remember.org/selma.

Our family consists of two boys and two girls, all born in Fort Stockton. My older brother, Herman, lived in Odessa and managed the Winkler store until his death in 1981. Fannie, my older sister, married

Dr. Joe Stool, pediatrician and member of a pioneer Del Rio family in the mercantile business. She now resides in Houston, where her husband practiced for many years. Miriam married Cecil Casebier, a local boy and artist who passed away in 1996 in San Antonio.

Six grandchildren survived Nathan and Anna Katherine. Each pursued a different vocation than the department store business. Edward Stool, M.D., is a chest and pulmonary specialist practicing in Houston. Anna Stool Prinz is an attorney in Houston who, after serving in the Federal District Attorney's Office, is now in private practice, also in Houston. Cecil Lang Casebier, son of Miriam Winkler Casebier, is with the U.S. Postal Service in Austin. Bobby Winkler, son of Herman, is in the real estate business in San Antonio.

My son, Martin Winkler, after receiving his Ph. D. from the University of Texas in Immunology, did his post-doctoral work at Rockefeller University in New York, then did research at St. Jude Children's Hospi-



Nathan Winkler at 86, December, 1969

tal in Memphis, Tenn. He and his wife, Jan, a microbiologist, are currently with Abbott Laboratories, a pharmaceutical firm in Chicago. Daughter Katherine, after graduating from University of Texas, received her B.S. in nursing at Cornell University in New York and later received her master's in nurse-midwifery at the

continued on page 21

Readers' Comments on the Girls of AEPHi



From Eleanor Levy:

Just a note to let you know that the picture of the Girls of AEPHi in the May newsletter has my mother-in-law's picture with the incorrect number. Her name is Evelyn Handleman Levy—she is not #7 as listed, but she is #8.

She is 87 years old and we showed her the picture and read the names to her. She enjoyed it and did remember some of the ladies.

From Isadore I Kahn:

My family and I were delighted to see the recent picture of "The Girls of AEPHi" in your May 2002 issue. As the husband of "girl" number 1, Ruth (Blaugrund) Kahn of El Paso, I wanted to share a little of our family history in an effort to "preserve the history of the Jews of Texas."

Ruthie, or "Mema," as her grandchildren affectionately called her, was born to Arthur and Pauline Blaugrund on March 20, 1916 in El Paso. Her father was co-owner of the American Furniture Company in El Paso, and both were Hungarian immi-

grants. Ruthie was a 1937 graduate of the University of Texas at Austin and majored in sociology. Ruth and I met in high school, and we started dating after I graduated from college at USC. We were married October 18, 1938. We were married for a wonderful 55 years.

Ruthie was a leader in our community. She was president of the El Paso chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women and also served as president of the El Paso Panhellenic, the Lighthouse for the Blind, and the Mesita School PTA. She was a member of the Temple Mount Sinai Sisterhood, the El Paso Chapter of Hadassah and the Visiting Nurses Association. She was the first woman to be elected to the Board of Trustees at our temple. She was a board member of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra and the

University of Texas at El Paso Auxiliary. She also was recipient of the 1968 Woman of the Year Award from the Woman's Club of El Paso.

An ardent golfer, my wife was a member of the El Paso Country Club's Women's Golf Association for over 45 years. She also loved to play bridge and Mahjong. Most of all, Ruthie enjoyed spending summers surrounded by her family at our cabin in Cloudcroft, New Mexico and in Newport Beach, California.

Her picture as part of the Jewish Historical Society May 2002 issue has given my family and I a special chance to reflect back on a remarkable lady - a wife, a mother of three, a grandmother of seven, and a great grandmother of four (with a fifth expected in June). Special thanks for sharing and preserving a gem in our family history.



*Ruth Blaugrund
Kahn*

Texas Jewish Historical Society Website

Texas Jewish Historical Society • P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766
Telephone: 817-927-8765

E-mail address: txjhs@yahoo.com

Web Site address: <http://www.txjhs.org>

The Texas Jewish Historical Society draws its membership from across the State of Texas, bordering states and across our great nation. TJHS supports a wide-ranging agenda. Quarterly Board Meetings are held at points of particular interest, an extensive newsletter is published regularly and a speakers bureau is maintained. A variety of research projects are facilitated through the Jewish Archives in the Barker Library and support is provided directly for projects such as "Virtual Restoration of Small-Town Synagogues in Texas."

We are very proud of our organization and ask you to look us up and celebrate the joys of Texas history.

Jewish Websites

At the last gathering of the Society in April, one of our more popular speakers was an evangelical Christian who spoke about "Anti-Semitism and the Church" and the propaganda of the Palestinians. Posy McMillan is a member of Hadassah and teaches courses in Judaism and also keeps track of what's going on the Jewish world.

She received a standing ovation from the Society and was inundated



with questions about the books and web addresses she spoke about. She is a great friend of

the Jews and everyone who has ever met her.

We have been contacted by many members of the Society to publish all the web addresses she referred to in her presentation. Here is the list of all the websites, both national and international, covering Jews, Arabs, political activism, education and Christianity.

News Sites

Christian

- *International Christian Embassy in Jerusalem:*
www.icej.org.il
- *Virtual Holyland:*
www.virtualholyland.org
- *Bridges For Peace:*
www.bridgesforpeace.com

Jewish

- *Independent Media Research & Analysis*
www.imra.org.il
- *DEBKA Intelligence Site*
www.debka.com

- *Arutz Shevah*
www.israelnationalnews.com
- *Jerusalem Post*
www.jpost.com
- *Ha'aretz*
www.haaretz.com
- *Information Regarding Israel's Security*
www.iris.org.il
- *Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America*
www.camera.org
- *Middle East Media Research Institute*
www.memri.org
- *Women in Green*
www.womeningreen.com
- *GAMLA*
www.gamla.org.il/english
- *E-mail: moshe01@netmedia.net.il*
to be put on his Israel news list

Countering Arab Propaganda

- *Photos*
www.rotter.net/israel
- *Project One Soul*
www.projectonesoul.com
- *Photos of Netzarim shooting*
www.geocities.com/rachav/netzarim.html
- *Photos*
www.facts4peace.com/photos
- *Information Regarding Israel's Security*
www.iris.org.il

Political Activist Sites

- *AIPAC*
www.aipac.com
- *Virtual Israel Political Action*
www.vipac.org
- *Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America*
www.camera.org

- *Site to sign petition in support of Israel*
www.onejerusalem.org
- *National Unity Coalition for Israel*
www.israel-unitycoalition.com
- *Helping Israeli Settlements*
www.helpingisrael.com

Educational Sites

Christian

- *Articles: Jerusalem School of Synoptic Studies*
www.jerusalemerspective.com
- *Center for Study of Biblical Research*
www.csbr.net
- *Virtual Holyland*
www.virtualholyland.org
- *Second Temple Synagogues*
www.smu.edu/~dbinder
- *Bridges for Peace (Christian Zionists)*
www.bridgesforpeace.com
- *Hebraic Roots of Christianity*
www.hebroots.org/israel/israel.htm

Jewish

- *Jewish Research Center*
www.us-israel.org/jsource
- *Interactive tour of Temple*
www.mosiach.com/mikdosh
- *Aish Ha Torah*
www.aish.com
- *Jewish Gates*
www.jewishgates.org
- *Judaism and Jewish Resources*
www.shamash.org
- *Dead Sea Scrolls Foundation*
www.deadseascrollsfound.org
- *Virtual Jerusalem*
www.virtualjerusalem.com

Miscellaneous

- *Virtual Israel Bookstore*
www.iguide.co.il/books/english/l.html

Jewish Family Celebrates its Texas Heritage

By Tara Dooley. Copyright 2002 Houston Chronicle Publishing Company.

Reprinted with permission. All rights reserved.

In its early years in Texas, the Schwarz family created a center of Jewish worship and learning in Hempstead, then a small-town stop on the railway line.

The family could boast among its ranks Rabbi Heinrich "Chayim" Schwarz, considered the first ordained rabbi to lead a congregation in Texas.

This past weekend, descendents of the rabbi and his two brothers—the first of the Schwarzes to arrive in America—gathered again in Hempstead and Houston to share family updates and honor their ancestors. They worshipped together at a Sabbath service, shared meals and visited the Jewish cemetery, which bears the remains of an important part of Jewish history in Texas and marks the start of families that spread to many corners of the United States.

"This is where it started," said Sydney Levine, who came to the reunion from Los Angeles, California, with her mother, Felicia Zeidenfeld. "It's Texas that is the center."

The roughly 50 family members who gathered stem essentially from three brothers—Gabriel, Sam and the rabbi, Heinrich.

Gabriel Schwarz was the first of the family to leave what is now Germany. He arrived in 1848 and settled in South Carolina, according to Hollace Ava Weiner's book about Texas rabbis, *Jewish Stars in Texas*. Sam Schwarz followed, and after fighting in the Confederate Army, made his way to Hempstead. Gabriel arrived in Texas soon after.

Chayim reluctantly made the journey in 1873, Weiner writes. Though not the first to perform as a rabbi in a Texas town, he is considered the first officially ordained, according to Weiner.

"What was fertile field for merchants appeared to be a wasteland to clergy, a place where guns were more plentiful than Bibles and acts of God materialized in tornadoes and hurricanes," was the country Chayim discovered, according to Weiner.

The Jewish community in Hempstead grew in the late 19th century, as Schwarz family members lured their friends to the Texas town, married and had children. A synagogue was built behind the home of Benno Schwarz, Chayim's son and owner of a successful store, said Sherry Freedman, whose mother lived in the house as a child.

For many in the family, their history was only recently discovered. Part of the reason for participating in the reunion was to reconnect with a lost legacy.

"We allowed our parents and grandparents to die without giving us much information," said Arthur Schechter, a lawyer and chairman on Houston's Metropolitan Transit Authority board. "It is a very bad mistake."

"It is probably one of the oldest Jewish families in the South and probably in Texas," added Schechter, descended from Gabriel Schwarz. "We are proud of that, now that we know it. I would encourage people not to let their roots wither."

The goal of the reunion was to reunite with family, share worship and traditions and focus on the cemetery, said Bertram Schwarz of New Rochelle, New York, who organized renovations to the cemetery with his wife, Miriam.

"I think it is a matter of respect for your forefathers who are buried there," Schwarz said.

It is also a matter of passing down

family history, traditions and Judaism itself from generation to generation, said Rabbi Deborah Schloss, who led Sabbath services and the cemetery memorial, passing faith and family through the generations—*l'dor v'dor*—is a central concept in Judaism, found in the Bible and liturgy, said Schloss, rabbi in residence of the Emery/Weiner School in Houston.

"It is a very important concept in Judaism that you learn from your family about religion and how to behave morally," she said.

There was also still much to learn about the family history. Throughout the reunion, there were crisscrossed branches to be straightened on family trees and a generation of toddlers to be added, said Miriam Schwarz, one of many who has taken on the task of mapping her husband's family over the years.

"I'm a child of a Holocaust survivor," Miriam Schwarz said. "If you have a family, you should perpetuate this. I can't (in her family) because they are all gone."

The rabbi died in 1900 and synagogue membership waned. By 1939, Hempstead did not have a *minyan*, or 10 Jewish men required for communal prayer, according to Weiner's book.

Now there are four or five Jewish people living in Hempstead, said Harry David "Trey" Schwarz, the rabbi's great-great-grandson and owner of Benno Schwarz's store.

Except for the cemetery, there are few reminders of the Jewish community in Hempstead. A school administration building bears the name of Sam Schwarz, although the "w" is missing from his last name. The synagogue is gone. A McDonald's and car lot

continued on page 21

Creating a Memory Book of Everyday Heirlooms

By Deborah Blumenthal, reprinted by permission of the author and Hadassah Magazine, original publication date is May, 2002

Putting together family memorabilia is much like piecing together a giant jigsaw puzzle. When it's all done, it gives you an illuminating picture. But how to begin?

Gather Your Family Memorabilia

This is the time to reach into the backs of drawers and take down boxes in the closets and attic. All of us have collections of old photographs, so take them out and sort them. Try to identify who is in the picture. If you can't, show them to relatives who might be able to help. (With people an e-mail away, you can scan photographs and send them to family members for identification.)

If you're lucky, the photographs will be dated. If not, try to find out—at least approximately—when they were taken and put that information on the back.

Family memorabilia tends to be stored around our homes: wedding announcements, graduation cards, diplomas, awards certificates, bar or bat mitzvah invitations, anniversary cards. I have diaries that my parents kept from their travels in Europe, hospital bills from when I was born, passports (wonderful to track where someone has been), letters, high school pins from my father and old jewelry.

Buy a large album or chest where these items can be stored. Every item you add to your family book or chest will be like another piece in your family puzzle.

Sometimes what makes for an important part of an album is overlooked. My husband and I have elementary school notebooks from both our girls and some of their first drawings. We also saved their letters from sleepaway camp. ("I hate it! Take me home!") Imagine the enjoy-

ment their children will get years from now when they sit down and read about how their parents felt when they left home for the first time.

Archival Material

If you go to the trouble of organizing old photos and mementos, it's important to treat them with care. When handling photographs, hold them by the edges or, like the professionals, wear cotton gloves because the oil in your skin can be damaging. Don't use rubber cement or Scotch tape to secure photos; use special adhesives or glues that are safe for attaching photos to paper.

■ **Paper:** The basic mounting paper used in albums is cardstock. It's heavy and can support the weight of photos. It should also be free of lignin, a substance that becomes acidic over time. To protect color photographs, the paper should have a pH of 6.5-7.5 and be alkaline-buffered or unbuffered and it should be colorfast.

■ **Pens:** When marking photos, use a wax or grease pencil or a Pilot Photographic Marker, a permanent marker with a fine tip. Never use a ballpoint or pencil that indents the paper.

■ **Page Protectors:** These are protective sleeves that can cover whole scrapbook pages or just your photos. Avoid products containing PVC (polyvinyl chlorides). Instead, choose those made with stable plastics such as polypropylene, polyethylene and polyester.

■ **Storage:** Whether your albums are finished or are works-in-progress, store them in a dark place; sunlight can fade photos. Keep them in a place with a constant temperature of about 75° Fahrenheit, not in hot attics or damp basements.

What do you do if your schedule doesn't allow the commitment of time?

Consider creating a mini-project that you can finish in an afternoon. Some ideas:

■ **Children's Picture Albums:** A parent and child might make a small album of children's pictures—first day at school, first haircut or *upsherin*, first time the child learned to swim or ride a bike—and offer it as a special present to a grandparent.

■ **Albums for a New Brother or Sister:** When your daughter or daughter-in-law gives birth to a second or third child, an album of photographs of the first one, perhaps given at the *brit* or *simchat bat* when all the focus is on the new baby, can make him or her feel special, particularly since the child faces fears of losing stature in the family.

■ **Jewish Holiday Album:** This might be devoted to pictures and memories from a particular holiday. Purim is a good time, with its colorful children's costumes and *mishloach manot*, baskets of cakes and treats. Or, easier still, create a recipe book with favorites that you serve on Passover or Rosh Hashanah. (This will make a wonderful addition to the pot roast you're famous for showing up with.)

■ **Family Cookbook:** Too often, recipes aren't written down, and all that's left when a mother or grandmother dies is the memory of their special dishes. Family cookbooks preserve these recipes, and they make wonderful gifts for brides-to-be or a daughter-in-law, so she can make the family favorites.

■ **Father's Day or Mother's Day Album:** A perfect gift from a son or daughter is a collection of pictures and memorabilia from their parent's days as a child.

Texas Jewish Historical Society Donor Cards

This card is available for anyone wishing to honor or memorialize an individual through our endowment fund. Upon receipt of your gift, the Society will respond with this acknowledgement. To the members who have sent in funds in the past, thank you on behalf of TJHS. To all those who will send funds in the future, please send your gift to:

Texas Jewish Historical Society
P.O. Box 10193
Austin, TX 78766-0193

The Texas Jewish Historical Society

gratefully acknowledges your gift to our

Endowment Fund

of \$ _____
in _____ of

An acknowledgement has been sent to the party you specified.

Your gift will further the efforts to record, preserve and disseminate historic information about the Jewish culture in Texas.

Have Exhibit, Will Travel

The Texas Jewish Historical Society, in cooperation with the Institute of Texan Cultures in San Antonio, has designed an exhibit to be used as an educational tool for schools, Sunday Schools, Jewish Community Centers, Synagogues, Temples and Special Events in any town or city in Texas.

The exhibit depicts the journey of Jews in tiny villages and shtetls in Europe to America and their eventual settlement in the communities of Texas. It shows families, businesses, homes, children, religion and holidays.

The exhibit is designed to be either hung on walls or set up on tables on foam board with an easel stand. The entire exhibit comes in two boxes, weighs 40 pounds, and can be shipped very easily via UPS. There is no charge for the exhibit and the only cost is the return charges via UPS.

To reserve the exhibit, along with a speaker, contact Jack Gerrick at 817-927-8765.



Relativity

By Pamela Colloff, reprinted with permission from Texas Monthly

When I told my family that I was moving to Texas eight years ago, the news was greeted with sighs around my grandmother's dining room table. My family saw Texas as alien territory, the opposite of the intellectual New York Jewish world in which I was raised. ("Are there Jews in Texas?" my grandmother asked me, only half joking.) Back then, none of us knew that many of our long-lost relatives, the Samuelsons, had moved to Texas during the Depression and that we had dozens of cousins scattered across the state, from Lubbock to Beaumont. The recent discovery of our Texas family has led to some unlikely revelations. I learned that an old storefront on Austin's Congress Avenue, one I've walked past nearly every day for years, used to be Slax Menswear—the headquarters of a local clothing business that my forgotten cousins ran for more than a century.

The two sides of my family have been shaped as much by our disparate geography as by the biology that links us. We are all descended from my great-great-great-great-grandfather Samuel Glassivitsky, a Russian peasant whose sons, Morris and Julius, came to America in the 1880's. The Glassivitskys (Morris' descendants and the Samuelsons (Julius' descendants, who bear his new American name, from "son of Samuel") were a tight-knit clan until the Samuelsons headed south to Louisiana at the turn of the century. The families remained close through the thirties, when my great-great-grandmother Rachel Glassivitsky Cohn—our sturdy, Yiddish-speaking matriarch, who was known as Bubba—would pack a suitcase of kosher food and take the train to New Orleans. Bubba eventually got too old to make the trip south,

and the families drifted apart. By the fifties, they had lost track of one another entirely.

Two years ago, a Glassivitsky cousin of mine who was doing some genealogical sleuthing found a Samuelson family reunion Web site, which explained that the clan traced its origins back to our Samuel Glassivitsky. My adopted home of Austin, I soon learned, was also home to many of my unknown cousins. This information was received by my side of the family with a mix of amazement and Yankee chauvin-



At Home: With my charming Austin cousin
Hymie Samuelson

Photograph by Kenny Braun

ism; southern Jews are often seen by their northern counterparts as being too assimilated and estranged from their culture, and my family was undeniably wary of these far-flung cousins. Though the Samuelsons turned out to be far less traditionally observant than my family—they bought Christmas trees and ate oysters, for starters—they were so engaging that even my deeply religious grandparents could not help but be charmed by them. We all met last summer in New Orleans for a family reunion, one that included more

than two hundred descendants of Samuel Glassivitsky, and raised our glasses to this lucky convergence of bloodlines.

My Texas cousins are everything that my family is not. We are bookish, intensely private, and driven; I remember watching my father and his first cousin compete to see who could finish the *New York Times* Sunday crossword first, racing to fill in the white boxes in ink. Our newfound cousins are warm, gregarious, fun-loving people—romantics at heart—who in their fading family photographs wear gardenias in their hair and dreamy smiles that speak to a sense of limitless possibility. We share a love of food and fashion and a obsession with politics. But the Samuelsons are inherently different, having lived in a place that owes less to Old World ways than to the idea of self-invention. The family's elder statesman is 83-year-old Hymie Samuelson, a vibrant man who has written fifteen books, some about his life and others about various metaphysical questions. He now reads my articles with a red pencil in hand, underlining passages that strike him and scribbling words of encouragement in the margins.

Last fall I ventured into a synagogue for the first time in a long while. It was the week after September 11, and I had gone as much to commemorate the Jewish new Year, Rosh Hashanah, as to find solace in tradition. I was relieved when I spotted Hymie's white hair in the front row, and I rushed over to kiss him hello. He squeezed my hand, in silent acknowledgement of the grief we were all feeling. "It's so good to see you," he whispered. I was glad to have found family so far from home.

Original publication date was
May, 2002

A Portion of the People: 300 Years of Southern Jewish Life

By Hollace Ava Weiner

COLUMBIA, S.C. — South Carolina's contradictions were evident in the Sunday editions of the state's largest newspaper: *NAACP to 'Patrol' S.C. Borders*. Why? To keep tourists out of a state that flies a Confederate flag on the statehouse lawn. Another front-page headline warned that the University of South Carolina risked being called "elitist" because of plans to hike College Board scores. Scholastic excellence might exclude sons and daughters of alumni.

The headlines implied a state mired in a time warp, a state with low expectations and low esteem, from within and without.

Yet inside the capital city's leading newspaper, the museum listings earlier this year showed a spark of past glory and reason for pride. "A Portion of the People," a million-dollar, two-year touring exhibit that explores Jewry in the Carolinas, from slaveholders to office holders, had opened at the University of South Carolina campus.

Ironically, this state still tied to Dixiecrat nonagenarian Sen. Strom Thurmond was initially at the forefront of New World tolerance. During its infancy Carolina was progressive, a haven from persecution and a cradle of democracy for Jews. One early rabbi equated Charleston with the Promised Land, calling "this city our Jerusalem, this happy land our Palestine."

The Lost Cause and the Jim Crow Era may have kept this state looking backward, but it was not always so.

Back in 1775, the western world's first Jew elected to public office was plantation owner Francis Salvador, who served in South Carolina's First Provincial Congress. Killed in 1776 during a British ambush, Salvador, a militiaman, was also the first Jewish patriot to die in the American Revolution.

He and other Sephardic and Ashkenazic Jews were drawn to Charleston during colonial times because here Jewish men could vote, buy land, join the Masons and easily enter into business partnerships with non-Jews. In Maryland, by contrast, Jews could not hold office until 1826. Because of the Carolinas' social acceptance, by 1800 colonial Charleston was America's Jewish capital with 500 Jewish citizens, more than any other North American city.

"It was a fantasy come true," declared author and Revson Foundation president Eli Evans, who keynoted the exhibition's January opening. "They needed people with trading contacts and credibility. . . . Word rippled out."

Elsewhere in America, Jews arrived in waves: Sephardic, then German, followed by Eastern European immigrants. In the Carolinas, Jewish entrepreneurs from diverse countries began arriving in the 1740s, braiding

their cultures like Jewish *challah* bread.

"An American Jewish experiment took root," observed Evans, author of *The Provincials: A Personal History of Jews in the South*. "This exhibition is their stories, their toys, their art, their letters, their diaries."

The Jewish Carolinians' success is mirrored in the Passover *haggadahs*, sterling silver trays, kiddush cups, and tea sets on display. Their gentility is conveyed in the yellowed bridal gown of Rebecca Rosenberg and the outdoor marriage canopy of 1st Lt. and Mrs. David Cohen whose printed wedding menu featured "formal fried spring chicken." The Jewish population's prominence is conveyed in a pair of oil paintings, one depicting the aristocratic Isabel Mordecai and the other, a blockade-running steamship named the *Isabel* in her honor.

At the Civil War's outbreak, 180 Jews from Charleston joined the Confederate Army. Their uniforms, swords, and letters give testimony to proud participation.

The interlacing of Southern and Jewish identity is also evident in Eleanor Israel Solomons' quilt, a patchwork of 63 squares stitched during the 1850s by friends and relatives. The design is replete with several six-pointed stars.

Not all is laudatory. The exhibition probes what Evans calls "the shadows."

continued on page 16

The dark side of Southern Jewish gentility was slavery. Census records disclose that in antebellum Charleston, four-fifths of the households owned slaves. Certainly the Jewish mercantile class fit into that slaveholding portion of the people.

Post-Civil War, Franklin Moses Jr., a Reconstruction Era politician and a scoundrel, served as governor. He was "so corrupt," he is generally "shunned by historians," Evans remarked, adding, "He's here," in the exhibit with a billboard-sized campaign banner.

Good and bad, famous and infamous, the Jews of the Carolinas were definitely "A Portion of the People." The exhibit title derives from a letter that journalist and teacher Isaac Harby wrote in 1816 to then-Secretary of State James Monroe. The journalist protested the ouster of the American consul to Tunis because he was Jewish. Harby wrote Monroe that Jews "are by no means to be considered as a *religious sect*, tolerated by government; they constitute a portion of the *people*. . . . Quakers and Catholics, Episcopalians and Presbyterians, Baptists and Jews, all constitute one great political family."

Harby, in 1824, was among a

group of mostly American-born intellectuals at Beth Elohim, one of the nation's first five synagogues, to petition for reforms in the worship service. The petitioners suggested shorter services and sermons from their rabbis. Breaking away, they organized the Reformed Society of Israelites. Seventeen years later, Beth Elohim incorporated those changes, and is acknowledged as America's first Reform congregation.

The experimentation, tolerance, and cosmopolitanism that once characterized South Carolina have been largely displaced in the face of the state's reactionary attitude toward desegregation, observes historian Theodore Rosengarten, who wrote the introduction to the exhibition catalogue, which is due out in September.

Rosengarten, winner of a 1975 National Book Award and a specialist in African-American history, does not usually critique Judaism. Neither did his spouse, Dr. Dale Rosengarten, the exhibit curator. Her specialty had been African-American sweet-grass baskets.

The Rosengartens are New York transplants. When the couple's son celebrated his bar mitzvah seven years ago, Dale

Rosengarten was dismayed that out-of-staters kept skeptically asking, "Are there Jews in the wilderness of South Carolina?" She joined other historians probing the roots of Judaism in the Carolinas. One thing led to another. Today she is curator of the Jewish Heritage Collection at the College of Charleston, an institution that has had a Jewish Studies program since 1984. With Dale Rosengarten at the helm, the College of Charleston, the University of South Carolina and the South Carolina Jewish Historical Society collaborated to create "A Portion of the People."

The traveling exhibition, partly underwritten by the National Endowment for the Humanities, will be on display in Charleston, S.C., at the Gibbes Museum of Art from September through November, 2002. For those sympathetic with the NAACP's South Carolina boycott, the exhibit travels to New York's Center for Jewish History from January to June, 2003, and to Charlotte's Levine Museum of the New South, September through November, 2003.

For more information, please visit the exhibition's website at www.cofc.edu/~jhc/pages/exhibit.html.

Photos Needed

We are looking for photographs to be used in the TJHS travelling exhibit. The photos should be uniquely Texan and Jewish such as Jews dressed in cowboy/ranching clothes, Jewish ranchers or anything that distinguishes the picture as Texan. Pictures must be labeled. Please send photos to: Helen Wilk, 260 Cape Aron, Corpus Christi, TX 78412 All photos will be returned.

Jewish History Month

A Jewish History Month celebration will be held in Shreveport and Bossier City, Louisiana during the month of October, 2002. Highlights include a performance by Israeli superstar Chava Alberstein, an exhibit from the Museum of Southern Jewish Experience, a Jewish Film Festival, a book signing by Leonard Nimoy and the joint meeting of the SJHS and TJHS. For more information, contact Susan Gross at 318-798-7759 or bookisha@aol.com

Texas Border Merchant

The story of emigrants coming to the United States at the beginning of a new century, starting a new life and achieving success in many forms, has been told many times. The story of Michael Riskin and his wife, Rachel, is as interesting and as fascinating as any story that preceded it.

Michael was born in the small village of Orsha, Russia in 1879. He was an apprentice to a tailor when his entire family departed for the United States without him. In Imperial Russia there were limited opportunities available to an individual. His family was able to send enough money for passage for him to come to the United States in early 1893. An expression used by many newcomers to denote one's financial status at the time when they arrived was "I came with empty pockets." Michael's pockets were very empty.

He achieved citizenship in 1900. Michael went to Chicago and worked as a tailor for someone else, making \$5.00 a week, a sum that he thought was enough to get married. While in the city he met another immigrant, Rachel Edelstein, and married her June 13, 1907. Rachel was born in 1880 and had immigrated from a small village, Kalvaria, Lithuania. She came from a family who owned land, which very few Jews were allowed have. In the "old country" Rachel had accom-



Michael and Rachel Riskin

panied, at different times, her seven brothers to haider, a Hebrew school. She learned what her brothers learned and knew the bible intimately. Her experience there had an important bearing on her family life in the United States.

The cold weather of Illinois had an impact on Michael, who had a pulmonary problem. His doctor advised him to move to a warmer climate. Since Rachel already had a brother, Abe, in Texas, Michael and Rachel decided to join him and moved to San Antonio. Abe was a peddler, who sold among other things, religious picture prints to the people of Eagle

the city, Mike, as he latter became known, learned to speak Spanish. There was a coal mine, Seco Mines, five miles from the city. Michael, knowing that there were individuals who could afford to buy some of his goods, walked there and back. Over a period of time, he did so well that he bought a horse and a wagon and continued calling on them. When Michael had enough money, he moved to a location on Commercial Street in downtown Eagle Pass close to the international bridge and near the traffic from Mexico. His knowledge of clothing aided him in establishing a quality, family clothing store, which he named M. Riskind. In the 1920's he



Michael and Rachel Riskin



M. Riskin's store on Main Street in Eagle Pass

Pass and Piedras Negras, Mexico. Abe told his sister that there were opportunities in Eagle Pass, a small town on the banks of the Rio Grande River, which separated Texas from Mexico. They took his suggestion and in late 1907 moved to the city. Michael walked the streets of Eagle Pass, selling whatever merchandise that he could carry on his person. Since there was a large Hispanic population in

opened another store on Commercial Street and sold furniture.

Ranching was the principal economic activity of the area, which centered mostly on sheep and to a lesser extent on cattle. Michael concluded that he would have a side business and in his early days in Eagle Pass bought a 1,100 acre ranch not too far from the city. Some of the land was suitable for cultivation and at a later

continued on page 18

time his son Morris farmed part of the property.

In Eagle Pass Rachel and Mike started a family with the birth of their second child, a daughter who was named Bess. The first child, a son, died in infancy in Chicago. Then a son, Morris, was born, followed by two daughters, Ruth and Sarah, and another son, Reuben. In those days all of the children were born at home and cared for by individuals who spoke only Spanish. The Riskinds employed the only negro in Eagle Pass, a man named Williams.

The business that Mike started became very successful. He bought a larger parcel of land on Main Street and built a large brick building, which adjoined the movie theater owned by Sam Schwartz, who brought "talking pictures" to Eagle Pass. Mike's success was due in part to his friendly manner with everyone and he became known as "Don Miguel". His customers were proud of their purchases from "Reessen", which was synonymous with quality. Mike was very considerate of those customers who could not pay in full for their purchases. He extended credit, even during times of the Great Economic Depression of the 1930's, keeping tab of each purchase. Mike called these accounts "leases". His trust was not misplaced.

The store prospered so that he had to expand his Main Street store, then expanded again when he added to it by building a second floor, which had twelve rooms including two baths and two kitchens. The family moved in the rooms above the store. In the 1950's and 1960's one of the upstairs rooms was used to hold High Holiday services with the Jews of Eagle Pass, Del Rio, Crystal City, Peidras Negras, Mexico and anyone who happened to be in the area at the time. Prior to that time the "upstairs" was known as the Jewish USO during World War II

when Eagle Pass had an Air Force Training Base with a number of Jewish personnel stationed there.

In the 1920's Rachel made a decision that her children should have a Jewish

education. She was adamant that her children be schooled in the Torah. Mike agreed. Rachel had cousins in Los Angeles and was influenced by them to move to the city. A house was purchased in East Los Angeles, California. The first four children started school in Eagle Pass. Reuben began his elementary education in LA and finished high school at Fairfax High School.

Bess, Ruth and Morris finished high school and went on to attend the University of Southern California. Sarah went to UCLA. Sarah's future husband, Mark Robson, also attended UCLA. He was originally from Montreal, Canada. Mark became very famous in Hollywood, mostly as a director, but also as a producer and a writer. He directed thirty-three motion pictures, including Von Ryan's Express, Bridges of Toko-Ri, Home of the Brave, Champion, Valley of the Dolls, and Peyton Place. Initially he started as a film editor in 1942. In the beginning he and Sarah had little funds, sometimes not quite enough to last them between pictures. Mike thought that they needed financial help. When Mark showed Mike his first bonus check for one million dollars, Mike told him that he did not



M. Riskin in his store on Main Street in Eagle Pass

need his father-in-law's assistance anymore. Mark was very ill when he made his last picture and died of a heart attack in London, England in 1978. Even though he was ill, he wanted to continue with the production so that everyone associated with the picture would be employed.

Morris went on to attend law school in California. After he completed his studies and was admitted to the California bar, he practiced law in Los Angeles. This was during the difficult economic times of the 1930's. Morris, known by his friends as Morrie, on March 30, 1944 married Ruth Scholtz, who was from the Bay Area of San Francisco and who graduated from UCLA.

Reuben finished high school in 1937. He participated in high school athletics playing tennis. His senior year in high school he participated in the Los Angeles High School Senior tennis tournament and won first place. During the summer of 1937 he participated in the State of Texas tennis tournament in San Antonio, Texas. He lost in the single finals and won the double competition. One of the observers at that tournament was Dr. Daniel Penick, the tennis coach at the

continued on page 19

University of Texas in Austin. Dr. Penick, who was very well known both as a tennis coach and a teacher of Latin and Greek, invited Reuben to attend UT. Reuben did and lettered in tennis all four of his years at UT. At one time or another Reuben has played against some of the top seed tennis player in the country. Reuben married his college sweetheart, Esther Swirce in 1941. Esther was from Mercedes, Texas and a member of the DPhiE sorority at UT. He went into military service in the spring of 1942 and served overseas in CBI (China, Burma, India) theater. Reuben was discharged as a Tech Sergeant March 20, 1946 at Ft. McArthur, California.

Mike assisted his other children. Bess married Sam Frank. He helped him to establish a dress manufacturing business. He gave funds to his daugh-

ter Ruth and her husband to set up a dress shop in McAllen, Texas. That shop was taken over by the family corporation later on and continued in operation for some time. Mike was always concerned about his family which included his cousins, and would help with employment in the store or with financial aid. He was a very generous person to all of those near him.

After WW II, the store had the services of Morris, who in addition came to help his father with the ranch, and Reuben. They continued to improve on their father's operation. The business was incorporated and stock given to all of the children. An employee pension fund in which the store matched the employee's contribution was established. This was a unique feature at the time. Some employees prospered greatly over the years. By the 1960's the store had seventy-four employees and was known as far away as Mexico City. In the 1930's there were only eight to ten employees. M. Riskind, Inc. had store highway signs in many cities in Mexico as far away as Saltillo. The store was known as one of the finest on the border, having the highest quality of family clothing and for outstanding service to its customers, wherever they came from. It was on the same scale as the major stores in El Paso and in Laredo.

Mike and Rachel had a great love of Israel and traveled there on several occasions, sometimes seeing

Rachel's relatives, Shlomo Uspitz and Ron Fellers. On one occasion when Mike was eighty-eight years of age, they were in Israel in the month of June when the 1967 war occurred. They spent six days in the basement of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem, while the fighting took place nearby. They were terribly frightened when a Bedouin, dressed in his familiar attire, came into the basement to seek shelter. At the moment it was not known that he was a friendly Arab. During the siege Mike wanted to leave several times and buy a cigar. He was denied permission each time to leave and that denial added to his discomfort.

Mike had a fondness for beer and Scotch whiskey, which he was happy to share with his "amigos." He was moderate, but consistent on the consumption of alcohol, never passing up an opportunity to have schnapps with his friends. As it should be, friendship meant a lot to him. Mike died in 1969, at age 91. Rachel died in 1979 at age 99.

The story might be better titled "Michael and Rachel Riskind-Pioneer Texans". They came from another century and another culture, adapted to the change of enormous freedom and great opportunity, and succeeded with their own initiative and intelligence. During all of their lives, they always were loving parents and always great friends to many individuals in their community. They were given an opportunity in Texas to succeed and to prosper. Their success continues on the form of grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Texas Border Merchant is by Reuben Riskind as told to Max Stool.



Standing, left to right: Bess, Morris. Sitting left to right: Reuben, Rachel, Sarah, Michael, Ruthie

Wouldn't you like to see YOUR family's history printed in this newsletter?

Contact Buddy Freed at
817-926-0455, or
ilfreed@aol.com

Texas Jewish Historical Society 2002-2004



Officers



Charles B. Hart (Temple)	<i>President</i>
Marvin Rich (Houston)	<i>Vice-President</i>
Mitzi Milstein (Longview)	<i>Vice-President</i>
Beverly Beck (Houston)	<i>Vice-President</i>
Ben Pfeffer (Houston)	<i>Treasurer</i>
Vickie Vogel (La Grange)	<i>Recording Secretary</i>
Selma Mantel (Houston)	<i>Corresponding Secretary</i>
Blanche Sheiness (Houston)	<i>Historian</i>
Ima Joy Gandler (Waco)	<i>Archivist</i>

Board Members 2001-2003



Elaine Albin (Rockport)
Dorothy Borschow (El Paso)
Roy Elsner (Odessa)
Dorothy Harelik (Hamilton)
Ruth Heidenheimer (Cisco)
Rosalind Horwitz (Beaumont)
Ed Katten (Waco)
Sylvia Gayle Klein (McAllen)
Sherman Kusin (Austin)
Annette Lackman (Arlington)

Marvin Leshin (Corpus Christi)
Melissa Mantel (Houston)
R. D. Moses (Fort Worth)
Louis Pink (Houston)
Nancy Polunsky (San Angelo)
Ralph Robinowitz (Dallas)
Don Schlossberg (The Woodlands)
Merilee Weiner (Houston)
Sherry Zander (Dallas)



Board Members 2002-2004



Norma Albert (McAllen)
James Alexander (Dallas)
Walter Fein (San Antonio)
Buddy Freed (Fort Worth)
Mickey Graubart (Houston)
Noel Graubart (Houston)
Gladys Leff (Dallas)
Goldye Levi (Dallas)
Mabel Massin (Houston)
Greg Meyer (San Antonio)

Allen Mondell (Dallas)
Shirley Ragusa (San Antonio)
Berta Schlesinger (McAllen)
Leta Schoen (Houston)
Louis Sokol (Houston)
Davie Lou Solka (Corpus Christi)
Max Stool (Del Rio/San Antonio)
Mimi Toubin (Brenham)
Hollace Weiner (Fort Worth)
Edward Winkler (Fort Stockton)



Welcome New Members!

February 9, 2002 - August 1, 2002

Aaron, Steve & Carol
9707 Meadowbrook Drive
Dallas, TX 75220

Cohen, Felice W.
2929 Post Oak Blvd., Apt. #1411
Houston, TX 77056

Dula, Tom & Sandy
5011 Vista del Monte
El Paso, TX 79922

Grodsky, Ronald & Susan
627 Ardsley Road
Longmeadow, MA 01106

Gross, Mike & Nez
1016 Wilder Way
Tyler, TX 75703

King, Steven & Jo
2001 Post Oak Blvd.
Houston, TX 77056

McCall, Al & Susan Susser
7887 Broadway, #601
San Antonio, TX 78209

Night, Ralph & Judy
20 Cheska Drive
Beaumont, TX 77706

Polland, Gary & Esther
5309 Braeburn
Bellaire, TX 77404

Rascusin, Lillian
2929 Post Oak Blvd., Apt. #1302
Houston, TX 77056

Reiser, Mr. and Mrs. Donald
1111 Hermann Drive, #25B
Houston, TX 77004

Riskind, Reuben & Esther
364 Main Street
Eagle Pass, TX 78852

Rosenberg, Leonard & JoAnn
2121 Kirby, #68
Houston, TX 77019

Weiss, Dr. Herb & Arlyne
9037 Briar Forest
Houston, TX 77024

Has Your Address Changed?

Has your address changed? What about your Area Code or phone number? Has your name changed? Do you want your name to appear differently on the TJHS mailing label? Please let us know. We'd really appreciate your help. Please send new information to:

Fay Brachman
3720 Autumn Drive
Fort Worth, TX 76109
phone: 817-924-9207
e-mail: leonhb@flash.net



Winkler, continued from page 8

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, where she now practices midwifery and is a part-time instructor in that field.

Edward Winkler, author, graduated from the University of Texas with degrees in business and law in 1939 and practiced until drafted into the army in 1941. Upon returning from the service in 1946, he entered the family business in Fort Stockton, retiring in 1994 when the stores were closed. He is active in community affairs, and in 1967 was named Outstanding Citizen. Selma received "First Lady of Fort Stockton" honors in 1999.

Schwarz, continued from page 11

border the site where it once stood.

But the family history is becoming part of the lives of the Schwarz descendents, Freedman said.

"To me, it is interesting," she said. "It gets your family pulled back together. It gives you your roots. It shows you where you came from and shows where you are going."

For Immediate Release

Ruthe Winegarten has a small number of copies of **Deep in the Heart: The Lives and Legends of Texas Jews** Available for \$50.00 each, (plus sales tax and shipping). Contact *her* at RuWine@aol.com, 512-453-7919 or 701 Keasbey, Austin, Texas 78751. She also has extra covers available in case yours is old and worn. (\$5.00 to cover postage and mail tube).

Deep in the Heart of Shreveport

By Hollace Ava Weiner

Why is the Texas Jewish Historical Society participating in the Southern Jewish Historical Society's conference Oct. 25-27 in Shreveport? A better question, particularly for a gathering of historians, may be, "Why isn't Shreveport flying the Lone Star flag?"

From its inception in 1836, Shreveport identified with Texas more so than with the Bayou State. So much so that in 1873 Shreveport and three surrounding parishes petitioned the Texas Democratic Convention to annex them. Shreveport's mayor, Samuel Levy (a member of the tribe to be sure), supported the resolution. It declared that residents of Bossier, Caddo, and Desoto Parishes identified politically and culturally with Austin, more so than with Baton Rouge.

Annexation by Texas might have helped the area's 19th Century economy. Upstate Louisiana felt little kinship with down state locales like Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Regardless, the Louisiana Legislature was not about to cede its Northern reaches to the boisterous state next door. The 1873 annexation petition never progressed an inch. That same year the Yellow Fever Epidemic brought more pressing issues of life and death to the fore. The annexation push receded.

Shreveport still has reminders of its early affinity toward the Republic of Texas. A river town, Shreveport was platted in 1836 shortly after the Texans, as they were called, defeated the Mexicans at the Battle of San Jacinto. Many a Texas city, from Palestine to Odessa, has thoroughfares commemorating Alamo heroes. Shreveport does too. Downtown boulevards include Travis Street, named for William Barret Travis who,

according to legend and to Walt Disney, drew a line in the sand. There is also Crockett Street, named for Tennessee Congressman Davy Crockett whose yen for adventure swept him into Texas. There is no Wolfe Street, as in Anthony Wolfe, another Alamo martyr whom historians argue might have been Jewish.

Shreveport maps also show Texas Street which extends into U.S. Highway 80, the westward highway of the 1800s that was initially called the Dallas-Shreveport Road. Trails off the beaten track once fed into Contraband Trace, a transportation network for slaves, cattle rustlers, and unlabeled bales of indigo. Bear in mind that prior to Texas statehood in 1846, Shreveport was an international border town with U.S. customs agents stationed there to ferret out contraband. The border region today calls itself ArkLaTex and is part of a tri-state pocket that shares television reception, weather patterns, and historic currents. Shreveport even belongs to the East Texas Chamber of Commerce.

A surprising number of Texans have kin in Shreveport. The city's longtime Reform rabbi, the late David Lefkowitz Jr., was raised in Dallas where his father was Big D's leading Reform rabbi. Nan Brener, wife of Shreveport's longtime Orthodox rabbi, Leo Brener, was a Waco girl.

The participation of the TJHS at the SJHS conference in Shreveport is a logical pairing. Once before our two societies got together, in Hot Springs, Ark., in 1997. That dual meeting was not without glitches in etiquette (among them a membership pitch for one group that trampled the sensibilities of the sister society). This time we have tried to be clear when de-

scribing the gathering. This is *not* a joint meeting. We Texans, while *participating*, are not planning or underwriting the program. The speakers are topnotch, and the Southern society wants to share them with as large an audience as possible.

The conference program is peppered with Texas flavoring.

The Civil War panel includes stories from the western front – meaning Texas. (Gary Whitfield, who grew up with Jan Hart in Dublin, TX., will be unraveling these forgotten Confederate tales.)

A KKK panel, featuring Roz Benjet, president of the Dallas Jewish Historical Society, will focus on the Lone Star State.

The book-and-author panel will feature two Texas authors: Rose Biderman whose recent hardback, "They Came To Stay," vividly tells the story of Jewish Dallas; and Bernard "B" Rapoport, whose autobiography, "Being Rapoport: Capitalist with a Conscience," tells his rags to riches life story.

The TJHS will have on display a photo exhibit, expanded by Helen Wilk and entitled, "Shalom Y'all: The Texas Jewish Experience."

The Southern Jewish Historical Society's president, yours truly, is a Texan from Fort Worth who serves on the board of both societies. On the Shreveport conference's final day, while the Southern society conducts its annual business meeting, the TJHS will convene separately for a fall board meeting.

Remember the Alamo and be aware that when visiting Shreveport you are only 39 miles from the Texas state line, a boundary that might have extended beyond Shreveport but for the Yellow Fever Epidemic of '73.

27th Annual SJHS/ TJHS Meeting Agenda Shreveport, LA, Oct. 25-27, 2002

For a complete program, visit
http://www.jewishsouth.org/2002_Conference/2002confagend_new1.htm

Thursday, October 24

7 PM. SJHS Board Meeting & Dinner, Sheraton Hotel

Friday, October 25

9:00 – 11:30 AM. Sightseeing at Shreveport's Jewish sites and special exhibits

11:30 AM. Conference Opening: Luncheon at Agudath Achim Synagogue. Speakers are Hollace Weiner, Rabbi Foster Kawaler and Charles Hart

12:15 – 2 PM Panel: "Jewish Confederates West of the Mississippi: Tales from Texas & Louisiana"

2:30 – 4 PM. Campus of Louisiana State University/ Shreveport: *Pitfalls & Paradoxes: Exhibiting Jewish History.*"

6 PM. Shabbat Dinner, Temple B'nai Zion

7:30 PM. Shabbat Evening Services at Temple B'nai Zion, Rabbi Harold Robinson, Followed By Keynote Speaker Dr. Jonathan Sarna.

Saturday, October 26

All sessions at Sheraton Hotel

8 AM Shabbat Morning Services, Rabbi Harold Robinson

9 – 10:30 AM Panel: "Jews in 100% America: Fitting into the KKK's Texas."

10:45 – 12:15 PM. Panel: "Race & Jewish Self-Definition," with Commentator Dr. Eric Goldstein and Panelists Dr. Mark I. Greenberg and Marni Davis

12:30 PM Lunch, Guest Speaker: Louis D. Rubin Jr.

2:30 – 4 PM Oral History: "Small Town Memories: Provincials No More."

7:30 PM Banquet, Guest speaker: Dr. Paul Gaston

Sunday, October 27

All sessions at Sheraton Hotel

9 – 10:30 AM Breakfast & General Business meeting of SJHS

10:45 – 11:45 AM Book and Author Panel, with authors Bernard Rapoport and Rose Biderman

12 PM Closing Luncheon with speaker Bill Aron

R E G I S T R A T I O N SJHS 27TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE & TJHS QUARTERLY MEETING

October 25-27, 2002

Please make reservations directly with the Sheraton Shreveport Hotel at 318.797.9900. Guests must identify themselves as SJHS/TJHS members to qualify for special convention rate of \$85. Airline & Car Rental Discounts: Delta Airlines offers a 5% discount off published round-trip fares, and an additional 5% if you book 60 days before departure. Call Delta Meeting Network Reservations at 800.241.6760, or contact your travel agent. Refer to file number DMN188943A. Avis offers discount car rentals. Use discount code D131064.

Convention fees include meals, sessions, and reception.

Last		First	
Spouse/Friend			
Address			
City		State	Zip
Phone ()		Email	
Name(s) on name tag			

All meals are "kosher style." Please check for Vegetarian

My expected arrival date and time is _____

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION (THRU OCT. 14)

SJHS/TJHS Member(s) \$180 each	_____ \$ _____
New SJHS Member(s) \$215 each (includes membership fee)	_____ \$ _____
New TJHS Member(s) \$215 each (includes membership fee)	_____ \$ _____

LATE REGISTRATION (AFTER OCT. 15)

Add \$25 to registration fee	_____ \$ _____
Total	_____ \$ _____

Please make your check to Southern Jewish Historical Society and mail with registration form to

Susan Gross, 308 Wildoak Drive, Shreveport, LA 71106

Texas Jewish Historical Society

P.O. Box 10193
Austin, Texas 78766-0a193

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
FORT WORTH, TX
PERMIT 4161



*****AUTO**5-DIGIT 78411

Mille 6
4101 Brett St # 1-01 26
Corpus Christi TX 78411-4500



Texas Jewish Historical Society Annual Membership

YES! I am enclosing my dues payment to the Texas Jewish Historical Society for the 2002 membership year.

I am a New Member Renewing Member

- \$36 - Annual Member \$50 - Supporting Member \$100 - Sponsor
 \$250 - Sustaining Member \$500 - Benefactor \$1,000 - Patron

Name: _____

Name of Spouse: _____ Maiden Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Home telephone: (_____) _____ Fax: (_____) _____

E-mail address(es): _____

Contributions to the **Texas Jewish Historical Society** are tax deductible within the limits of the law.
Please clip and send with your check to: **TJHS**, P.O. Box 10193, Austin, TX 78766-0193